

3
*Practical Discourse necessary for
these Times.*

THE
GREAT DUTY

OF

*Doing as we would be done
unto,*

Explain'd and Enforc'd,

IN A
SERMON.

By James Johnson, M. A. and Rector of Mel-
ford in Suffolk.

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THE FIRST PART OF THE HISTORY OF THE REFORMATION OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

MATTHEW VII. 13.

Therefore all things whatsoever ye would
that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

U. R. Lord, in the foregoing Chapter
we have seen, having at large examined the



Scripture and the writings of the Fathers, we have
seen that the Church of England, in the reign of
King Henry VIII. was in a state of great
corruption and decay, and that the
Reformation was necessary for the
restoration of the Church to its original
purity and simplicity.

The first step towards the Reformation was
the suppression of the monasteries, which
were then in a state of great poverty and
decay, and the transfer of their lands and
revenues to the Crown.

The next step was the establishment of the
Royal Supremacy, which was declared by
the Act of Supremacy in the first year of
King Henry VIII. This Act declared that
the King was the supreme head of the Church
of England, and that he had the power to
grant dispensations and to appoint and
remove the clergy.

MATTHEW vii. 12.

Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

OUR Lord, in the foregoing Chapter, having at large explain'd the Nature, and press'd the Necessity of those Duties we owe to our Neighbour, is in this drawing to a Conclusion; and that what he had deliver'd, might be the better carried off, and reserved for the Benefit of his Hearers, he gives them the Sum of it in this short, but Divine Sentence. In speaking to which, I shall observe this Method.

- I. *Shew what is the Design and Meaning of the Text.*
- II. *Shall endeavour to recommend it to your Prosecution.*

III. And lastly, *Shall draw an Inference or two from the Whole, and so conclude.*

I begin with the First, namely, to shew the Design and Meaning of this Rule in my Text.

I. Now tho' our Saviour in this Place makes use of that most large and general Expression, *All things whatsoever you would that men should do unto you, &c.* yet we are not from hence to believe, that the bare Desire of having the same Things done to our selves, can be always a sufficient Warrant for the Lawfulness of what we do to other Men; because our Desires may sometimes be irregular, and then certainly they cannot be a safe Rule for the Conduct of our Actions. There is indeed nothing in which the Generality of Men are more apt to offend, than in the Things they desire for themselves; and if they may be allow'd to deal with others by the Standard of those Desires, this will be so far from being a Rule of Equity, that it will lead them into Injustice; for
if

if a Man be any way viciously inclin'd, and desires others to minister Fuel to his Lusts, if he longs to have his Ambition gratify'd, his Avarice satiated, his Revenge assisted, or any other unlawful Design carried on for him by other Men, is it therefore lawful for him, by Vertue of this Rule, to do the same to them, because this is but to do, as he desires to be done by? No, certainly, our own Desires being under a Law themselves, can never be properly said to be a Law of our Actions, unless a Man could be under an Obligation always to act according to his Desires; the restraining of which, is the End and Design of all Laws whatever.

But then, tho' our own Desires are not simply, and in themselves, a Law of our Actions, yet are they, when reduced within proper Bounds, a most excellent and easie Rule to discover what the Sense of the Law is, and are so far, and no further, a Rule of our Actions, than as they express the Sense and Tenour of the Law. And this, I presume, is the very Thing
our

our Lord means in this Place, as is plain, by the Reason he gives, for the Authentickness of this Rule. *For this, saith he, is the Law, and the Prophets;* that is, this is agreeable to those many particular Laws of God, which are given us to govern, and direct our Actions by: or is, in other Words, the full Design and Import of those Laws; so that beside the Desire of having the same Things done to our selves, we must first be sure that those Desires are agreeable to the Divine Laws, before we can safely guide our Actions by them.

But then, if we are first to regulate our Desires by the Laws of God, before we can safely measure our Actions by them, how comes our Saviour to give us those Desires for a Rule of Action, and not directly send us to the Law itself? I answer, This he does.

1. For the more easie Discovery of our Duty; for however backward Men may be in learning their own Duties to others, they are generally quick enough in discovery.

covering other Men's Duty to themselves; they can see clearly, determine wisely, and stand upon their Rights and Privileges; whereas, when we are to look into the same Law to discover what we ourselves owe to others, we are generally full of Prejudice and Aversion; our Reason is blind; our Affections are brib'd; our Duty seems severe and impossible; and the greatest Part of our Labour will be spent in finding out Ways to evade the Obligations of it.

Now, to prevent such Excuses for disobeying the Commands of God, as arise from Prejudice and Misinterpretation, our blessed Lord sends us to the true Authentick Copy, or Counterpart of it, which we drew out for others to observe towards us; and we may be pretty well assur'd that this is the whole Law, and the Prophets; because we can judge more freely and impartially, when we lay Obligations upon our selves; when other Men's Actions towards us are prescrib'd by a Law, we shall make it our Business

ness to discover what their Obligations are, how far, and in what Cases they stand bound and oblig'd to us. 'Tis unreasonable to suppose we shall recede from our Due, or be satisfied with less than we can claim, by the very Rigour of the Precept. Nothing in such a Case will content, or satisfy us, but the strictest Justice, the most generous Charity, the most ingenious, open, candid Dealing towards our selves; which insensibly leads us to the Knowledge of our Duty, and shews us every Punctilio of what we are to do to other Men. But then,

2. Tho' Interest may oblige us to demand of others all that we can claim by the Laws of God, may it not also put us upon straining the Precept too far, and demanding more than is our Due?

Now, to prevent such a probable and almost natural Error, our blessed Saviour has most admirably provided this Remedy, that no one should demand of others more than he himself would be willing

willing to repay in the same Case: so that when a Man's Behaviour to others is regulated by what he expects from them, there is no Reason to fear his being excessive in his Demands, for fear of laying too great a Burthen upon himself; and consequently this Rule must be a full, perfect, and sufficient Guide of Humane Actions in such Cases: 'Tis neither defective, nor excessive in any Point; 'tis not defective, because Men will be sure to claim all that the Laws of God make due to them from others; and 'tis not excessive; for because they are to repay under such severe Penalties, they will not claim too much. Which brings me to the

II. General proposed, viz. To endeavour to recommend this most excellent Rule to your most serious Practice.

And here in the midst of so many Instances of its Excellence, Uses, and Advantages on all Sides, so great, so apparent, so absolutely Necessary to the Well-being of the World, 'tis hard to single out Particulars: Where every Thing is

an Argument, every Thing may be left unsaid; because such Things bring their Evidence along with them, and are more easily admired than recommended. And indeed this most excellent Rule needs only to be known and understood, to gain it the Esteem and Veneration of Mankind. 'Twas never yet proposed to any Age or State of the World, but it was heartily embraced; 'tis the Admiration of the very *Jews* and *Heathens* themselves; those that reject and despise our Saviour, do yet acknowledge the *Divinity of this Precept of his*, as being the exactest Rule of Equity, and the universal Law of Nature. There never was any Person so degenerate, as to question the Reasonableness of it: Even those who are injurious to others do yet appeal to it themselves when they come to suffer: For it speaks the Sense of humane Nature, stands upon the fixt and eternal Reason of Things, and is establish'd a supreme Law by the Consent of all Mankind: So that he that shall refuse to adjust his Actions
by

by this common and approv'd Standard, may justly be esteem'd the Enemy of Mankind, and deserves to be treated accordingly.

2dly, We are most sacredly obliged to do to others, as we would they should do unto us, because all Men have as good a Right as our selves to the same just and equal Treatment, the Nature, Desires, and Interests of all Men being the same. He therefore that shall desire any thing upon the Account of his own Nature, which he will not allow to the same Nature in another, has certainly forgot that he himself is a Man, if he deserves the Honour of that Title. For he that has no Compassion for humane Nature has quite stript himself of it: For 'tis impossible to wear Humanity, and not commiserate his Sufferings; *Remember them that are in Bonds*, says the Apostle, *as being your selves also in the Body.* Hebr. 13. 3. There are Springs within our Souls which move us powerfully to those Duties; we gratify them highly when we do well, and

cannot refrain without Trouble, and Violence to our selves : And the Reason is this, because all Men are so nearly ally'd in their Nature, and Interests, that we cannot chuse, but put our selves in the room of the Miserable. To claim one Sort of Treatment for our selves, and to refuse the same Treatment to others, of the same Nature, and in the same Circumstances, is the highest Piece of Injustice. For if we are taken out of the same Lump, cast in the same Mold, and are all of us exactly equal, how unrighteous and absurd is it, (*as an excellent Author speaks*) to meet out equal Things, by unequal Measures? And if my Wants and Necessities are the same with other Mens, if I desire to receive the same Good from every Man, which every Man wants and wishes for himself, with what Confidence, nay, with what Conscience can I expect to have my Weakness reliev'd, if I refuse to do the same to others, from whom alone I can receive it?

3dly, As

3dly, As this Rule is so highly to be valued for its Equity and Reasonableness, so 'tis also for its Brevity and Perspicuity; by which Means it is not only more easily understood, but more readily apply'd to particular Actions, than any other Rule of Life. Almost infinite is the Number of Volumes that have been written, to instruct Men in their several Duties to one another; but few have the Leisure to read, or the Skill to understand, and form Maxims of Life from them; But to look into ones own Breast, and observe the Workings of our own Desires, is the most easy, and pleasant Thing in the World: The Law is written in our Heart, and stares us in the Face, and tells us our Duty plainly, and affectionately too; so plainly, that 'tis wholly impossible for us to be insensible of its Truth and Equity. For to do to others, as he desires to be done by, *this* every Man understands; every Man knows *what it is that he desires*, and consequently what he is to do. There is no need of a Commentator to explain,

explain, or a Casuist to guide in Difficulty; the Way is open, easy, and just before him: Let the Case be never so intricate, the Circumstances never so various, and perplex'd, a prudent Application of this Rule will guide a Man's Conscience safely through all his Doubts.

If ever you question, how you are to behave your self towards your Neighbour, do but change your Station, and put your self in *his room*, and the Business is done: By this means you will immediately perceive what you should then expect, and that is always the Thing you are to do: By this means the Matter will clear up, and that which before seem'd severe and unreasonable, will now appear, most just and equitable. When you represent the Person of another, you are then free from Prejudice, your Eyes are open, you judge for your self, and that very Interest and Self-love which before hinder'd, will now prompt you to your Duty. And as this Rule is to be so highly valued for its Brevity and Perspicuity, so 'tis in the

4th Place

4th Place, for its Fulness and Sufficiency; by which it extends it self to all Conditions and Circumstances of Life whatever, and speaks the incomparable Wisdom of our Law-giver. It has always been esteem'd the Mark of a most wise and excellent Person, to speak much in a little, and to have Words swell with momentous and great Sense: Thus Angels speak, and Men inspir'd; were such only to discourse, there would be no tedious Orations about any Thing: To be over-long upon a Subject, speaks the Ignorance of the Author: A clear Understanding delivers, in short, all that's necessary to be known: But this indeed is a Talent seldom given to Man; those that succeed best in it, by their Brevity, grow deficient or obscure. The Statute wants some necessary Part, while 'tis thrust into too close a Room. But now this Precept of our blessed Saviour agrees exactly with the Wisdom and Divinity of its Author: It is a perfect Abridgement of all the Laws of God and Nature: There

There is not any Case or Emergency, or Circumstance of Duty, which this does not most apparently comprehend, and lay before us: It guides us in all Capacities, and ways of Life; as Magistrates, or People, as Parents, or Children, as Masters, or Servants, as Superiours, Inferiours, or Equals: A due Observation of it will make the most incomparable Statesman, and the most excellent Magistrate; it will give the most prudent Advice, and the most politick Counsels, and the safest Rules for the discharge of weighty Employments: It speaks more in one single Sentence than all the Codes and Pandects of the Law: It enters into all our Designs, and mingles with all our Actions: It extends it self to all States and Conditions of Life, and leads us in Peace and Pleasure, with Innocence and Honour, through the World.

'Twere easy to go through all the Commandments, and shew particularly the Truth of what we are here discoursing: But that I may not be tedious in discoursing

coursing on a short Rule, I shall mention
but Two or Three of them.

1st, As to the *Commandment* which
forbids *Adultery*; He that abuses me here,
strikes me in a tender Part, and wounds
me to the very Soul; wrongs me of my
Peace, my Honour, and *all that* upon
which the *Comfort of Life* does most
depend; exposes me to everlasting Dis-
quiet, and ruins a Family at a Blow;
gives away my Estate perhaps, to an ille-
gitimate Brat, and leaves a Blot upon
my House, and Family. Can there be a
greater Piece of Cruelty and Inhumana-
nity conceiv'd? How should we rave and
threaten, were we thus abus'd? What
Words, what Torture, should we think
bad enough for that Man? How then
can any one *do this* to another, which he
cannot think of with Patience, when ap-
ply'd to himself?

2^{dly}, As to those *Commandments* which
forbid the *shedding of Blood*, or of in-
juring our Neighbour in his Body, Goods,
or good Name; Can you think of being

cut off in the midst of your Days, to be depriv'd of all the Comforts of Life, by a Pistol or a Dagger, to be dispatch'd in a Moment into another World, in the midst of your Sins, without so much Time, as to fall down and beg Mercy? Can any Man think of this without Horrour? How then can we think any Provocation committed by another, sufficient to justify in our selves such inhumane Butchery?

The same may be said of that *Commandment* which forbids *false Witness, and all manner of Detraction*; To swear a Man out of *his Life, or Estate, or Reputation*, to give his Name a private Stab, to whisper a Surmise, or a known Falshood concerning him, to rob him of his Reputation, which is as dear to him as his Life, and perhaps the Support of it too, who that ever heard of our Saviour's Rule, can ever indulge himself in such unreasonable and unmanly Practices? And will he not, when he puts himself into the Place and Condition of another,
think

think it most injurious to be thus treated? Let us all therefore *do unto others, what we would they should do unto us*, and we shall reap this great Security by it, we shall then do no Evil, nor receive any: For this, *Thou shalt not commit Adultery, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false Witness*, and if there be any other Commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this, *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self*, that is, in the Words of my Text, *Thou shalt do to him, as thou wouldest he should do unto thee*.

Lastly, Not to insist only upon the Equity, and Reasonableness of Things, let us look into Revelation it self, and see what is the Sum and Substance of the second Table of the Law, delivered by God upon Mount Sinai, but to teach the World this one Duty, of *doing as they would be done by*? What other Doctrine does the Saviour of the World preach? He that came to reform Mens Minds, and to raise Morality to its Height, says

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only

Only this; *Do unto all Men, as ye would
 they should do unto you.* With what
 special Care and Application does he lay
 open, and inculcate the Duties of Justice
 and Charity; taking the several Pre-
 cepts of the second Table, and vindica-
 ting them one by one, from the false
 Glosses of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, cor-
 recting the Errors of Mens Minds con-
 cerning them, clearing the Sense, and
 heightening their Obligation? It seem'd
 to be one of the greatest Designs of our
 blessed Saviour, to keep Men from do-
 ing any Evil, and to encourage them to
 do all possible Good to one another; To
 root out all uncharitable Passions and De-
 sires out of the Hearts of his Disciples,
 to plant good Correspondence, mutual
 Benevolence, and universal Charity a-
 mong Men. Does he not in one of the
 first and chiefest Places, provide for Up-
 rightness of Life, Integrity of Action,
 and for the true Christian Simplicity, and
 Probity of Life, and Manners? And do
 not all his Apostles after him, in all their
 Teaching,

Teaching, exhort and stir us up, to add to our Faith Virtue, and to provide things honest in the sight of all Men, that the Name of GOD, and his Doctrine be not blasphemed by any unjust and dishonourable Practices! And certainly in these things, the Credit and Reputation of Religion is most deeply concern'd; Because these are Things of the most general Approbation, and most suitable to the Reason of Mankind: These are Duties which the Light of Nature obliges all Men too; And therefore those who are without will always judge of us by our Conformity to these. And most certainly we shall never deserve the Character of truly Pious and Religious Men, if, notwithstanding our specious Professions, we shall be found faulty in our common Dealings with the World. For tho' some Men will raise Objections, and perswade themselves into real Prejudices against Reveal'd Religion, yet these are things, which (as the Apostle speaks) are both acceptable to GOD, and approv'd of Men. Rom. 14. 18. Wherefore

fore the same Apostle calls most emphatically, upon all those who profess the Gospel of Christ, to take heed to the strict Honesty, and Integrity of their Actions: *Whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any vertue, any praise, think on these things.* Phil. 4. 8. These are the Things which adorn the Gospel of GOD our Saviour, give a Beauty and Lustre to Religion, and recommend it to the Love and Veneration of its greatest Enemies. Let us therefore in all our Dealings and Transactions, take great heed, to do every Thing with such Honesty of Intention, such Manly Plainness, Undissembled Sincerity, and Uprightness of Heart, as become those who profess themselves the Disciples of the HOLY JESUS, who was the most Just, the most Charitable, the most Innocent, and Undesigning Person in the whole World; who made it the Business and Employment of his Life, to do Good; who
never

never did any Evil, and most sacredly oblig'd his Followers to do none, to their greatest Enemies :: For we are not to do unto others, as they have done unto us, but what we our selves could wish, and desire that they had.

I shall now proceed in the last Place, to draw an Inference, or two, from what has been said, and so conclude.

And 1st, From what has been spoken, we may infer the Easiness and Excellence of the Christian Religion; Its Precepts not only being consonant to Reason, and adapted to the Capacities of Men, but exactly suited to all the true Ends and Exigencies of Humane Life. What else is the whole Body of *Christian Ethicks*, deliver'd by our Saviour on the Mount, but to teach us, how to live up to the true Dictates of Nature, to gratify the best and wisest Inclinations of our own Minds, to teach us how to distinguish between Happiness and Misery, Wisdom and Folly, and to pursue the true End and Design of our Being, the Happiness
of

of Body and Soul both here and here after? When any Duty comes thus recommended, it cannot but approve itself to our Liking; when we see there is nothing required of us, but what is founded on the eternal Reason of Things, and would appear most fit, and convenient to be done, were there no Authority to enjoin it.

To be Just and Charitable, Kind and Generous; to be the Patron of the Poor, and the Refuge of the Miserable, and Distress'd, these are Instances of Vertue, so very reasonable, and agreeable to the natural Tendency of our Minds, that we must esteem him not a Man, who shall pretend to be insensible of his Obligations to them. For what plainer, clearer Principle of Acting can there possibly be, than what our Saviour has given us in this Case, *Do unto all men, as you would they should do unto you?* The same Reverence, Honour, and Obedience, to our Parents, and Masters, and Governours, which we may justly claim our
selves,

selves, from our own Children, or Ser-
 vants, or Inferiours ; The same Justice,
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 in this, is most apparently seen the Excel-
 lence of the *Christian Religion* above all
 Religions in the World besides, that it
 does not impose any slavish and unrea-
 sonable Burthens upon us, does not make
 God, by one Revelation, to cancel ano-
 ther, and by the Addition of a New
 Light, to extinguish that of Nature ; but
 the great Design of it is, to revive the
 Divine Image in our Hearts, to refresh
 those Characters on our Minds, which
 were dim and obscure ; by recommend-
 ing the good, old, reasonable Principles
 of Justice, and Kindness, and common
 Honesty to the World, which make it al-
 most as Natural to become a Christian,
 as to be a Man.

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Lastly,

Lastly, we may from hence observe, that the natural Tendency of Religion is to promote the Interest of Societies, and the Peace and Happiness of Mankind, the most excellent and easy Rules it prescribes for the Government of our Actions, in all States and Conditions of Life, being such, as do naturally tend to advance the Peace and Security of any Kingdom: It obliges us, under the severest Penalties, to a religious Performance of all our Moral, Natural, and Political Duties; and by so doing, removes the Occasions of Envy and Discontent, the great Disturbers of the World. For where the Laws and Precepts of Christianity are observ'd, every Man has a Confidence in his Neighbour, and the best Security in his own Life and Possessions. He apprehends no Oppressions from the Great, and fears no Injury from his Equals, or Inferiours: He sits secure under his own Vine, rejoices in the Fruit of his own Labours, and is in Peace and Amity with all Mankind.

Now,

Now, besides the Strength, which the Union and good Correspondence of the Members give to the whole Body, which never fails, where this Duty is conscientiously practised, besides this, I say, this Rule will recommend a Government to the *Affections of a People*, and make it their *Interest* to promote its Welfare. The late horrid Conspiracy of those Sons of *Belial*, (notwithstanding His Majesty's most mild and just Government,) is no Argument against *this Truth*. Those are *Monsters* in humane Shape, *dissolute Wretches* that know not their own Happiness. And almost in all Kinds, there are some few Instances contrary to, and besides the general Course of Things. But certain it is, no Man can revolt from, or turn Rebel to *His sacred Majesty King GEORGE*, (whom G O D long preserve! Who hath ever since His Auspicious Reign over us, made *this Divine Law the great Rule of His Government*,) but he must, by so doing, recede even from his own *private Interest*: Every Subject stands

bound by *that alone*, without any other Consideration, to promote, (as far as in him lies) the Publick Peace and Welfare, and to support the present Government, as by Law establish'd among us.

And as the conscientious Practice of this Duty tends to secure any Society or Kingdom, against *all wicked Designs at Home*: So it no less tends to strengthen it with firm Alliances from *Abroad*. All Nations round about will court a People fam'd for Justice and Honour, and consequently upon whose Leagues and Compacts they may *safely* depend.

But farther, ~~the~~ Religious Observance of this Rule will engage the good Providence, and Protection of Heaven, to defeat the traiterous Designs of wicked Men to undermine a Nation: A signal Instance of which, we of this Kingdom have lately had, in the happy Discovery of one of the most Hellish Plots that ever was form'd by Men; for which every true Protestant can never be enough thankful, God will preserve a People
that

that honour his Name, and observe his
 Laws, and that execute Justice and Judg-
 ment, when there is no Noise of Oppres-
 sion in our Streets, no Orphans Tears,
 or Widows Cries to pull down Judg-
 ments upon our Heads. We need not
 go farther than the common Observation
 touching the Growth and Decay of Na-
 tions, or that Account which G O D him-
 self hath given us in the sacred Scriptures;
 to be resolv'd, that 'tis Injustice and Op-
 pression, that is the Scourge of any Na-
 tion: And that Vertue and Integrity is
 always the prevailing Argument with the
 Almighty's Goodness to protect it. This
 is the Account we receive from Histori-
 ans, of the Power and Grandure, and of the
 Decay and Ruin of the *Roman* Empire.
 The Reputation of the Generosity, and
 Religion of the *Romans*, gain'd them
 more Conquests than their Valour and
 their Arms: And then did their Eagles
 begin to droop, their Success to flag, when
Numa's Spirit of Religion was lost, and
 their Antient Justice and Integrity began
 to

to fail. Nor do the Writers of the Old Testament give any other Relation of the various Scenes and Periods of the Jewish Nation: So that the entire Fate of Countries and Kingdoms seems to depend upon their Virtues, and to be supported only by the Integrity of those that dwell therein.

To conclude, The great Duty we have this Day recommended to you, is Justice, or in the Words of the Text, *the doing as we would be done by*: A Duty which cements and preserves the Bonds of Peace and Love, defends our Names, our Persons, and our Beds, affords the best Security to Prince and People, cuts off those Sins, which make the Almighty proclaim War with a Nation, tends to the Tranquility and Peace of every private Person, endears the Government to every Subject, makes the World to court the Friendship and Alliance of a People, makes a Nation lov'd at Home, and honour'd Abroad, recommends it to the Favour both of God and Man, and lastly, does above
all

all Things tend to promote the Interest of Society, and to procure the settled Peace and Tranquility of any Kingdom. *And happy are the People that are in such a Case, yea, blessed are the People who have the LORD for their GOD.* When the Honour of GOD is advanced, and his holy Laws and Precepts kept sacred, and inviolable, then Justice flows in the Streets, like Waters, Righteousness and Peace do then meet, and kiss each other.

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, Three Persons but One God, be ascribed, as is most due, all Honour, Power, Praise, Might, Majesty, and Dominion both now and for evermore. Amen

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THE END OF THE
FIRST PART OF THE
BOOK OF THE
PSALMS

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